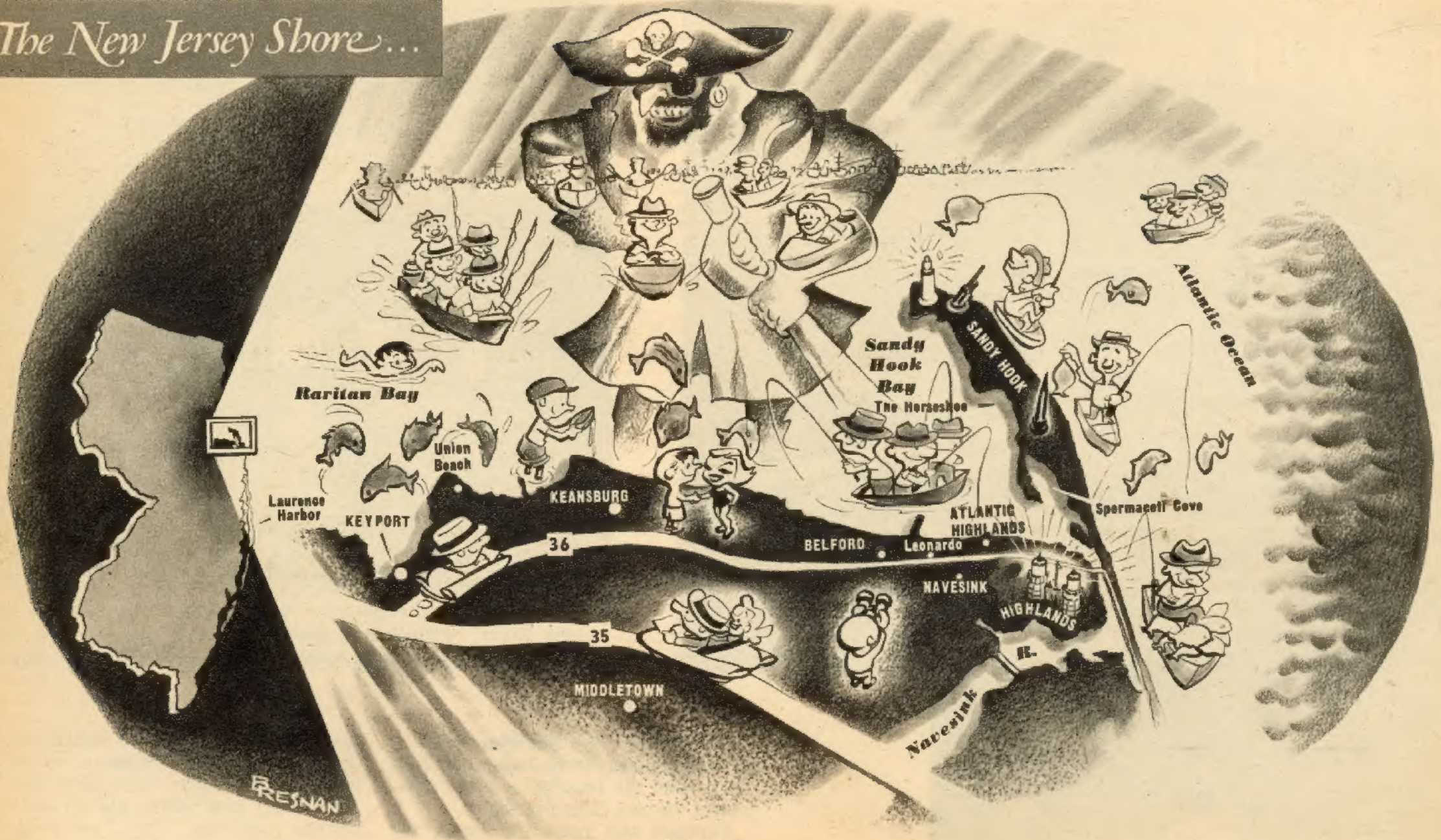


The New Jersey Shore...



Map by Staff Artist Jim Bresnan

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

HIGHLANDS, HOOK and BAY

*Metropolitan Area's 'Gateway to the Atlantic' Has Played
Host to a Fascinating Parade of Transients From
Henry Hudson to Present-Day Lovers of Sand, Sea and Surf*

FAMILIARITY and mystery exist side by side where the long, thin finger of Sandy Hook reaches out from the Highlands of Navesink to fend off 3,000 miles of rolling Atlantic Ocean.

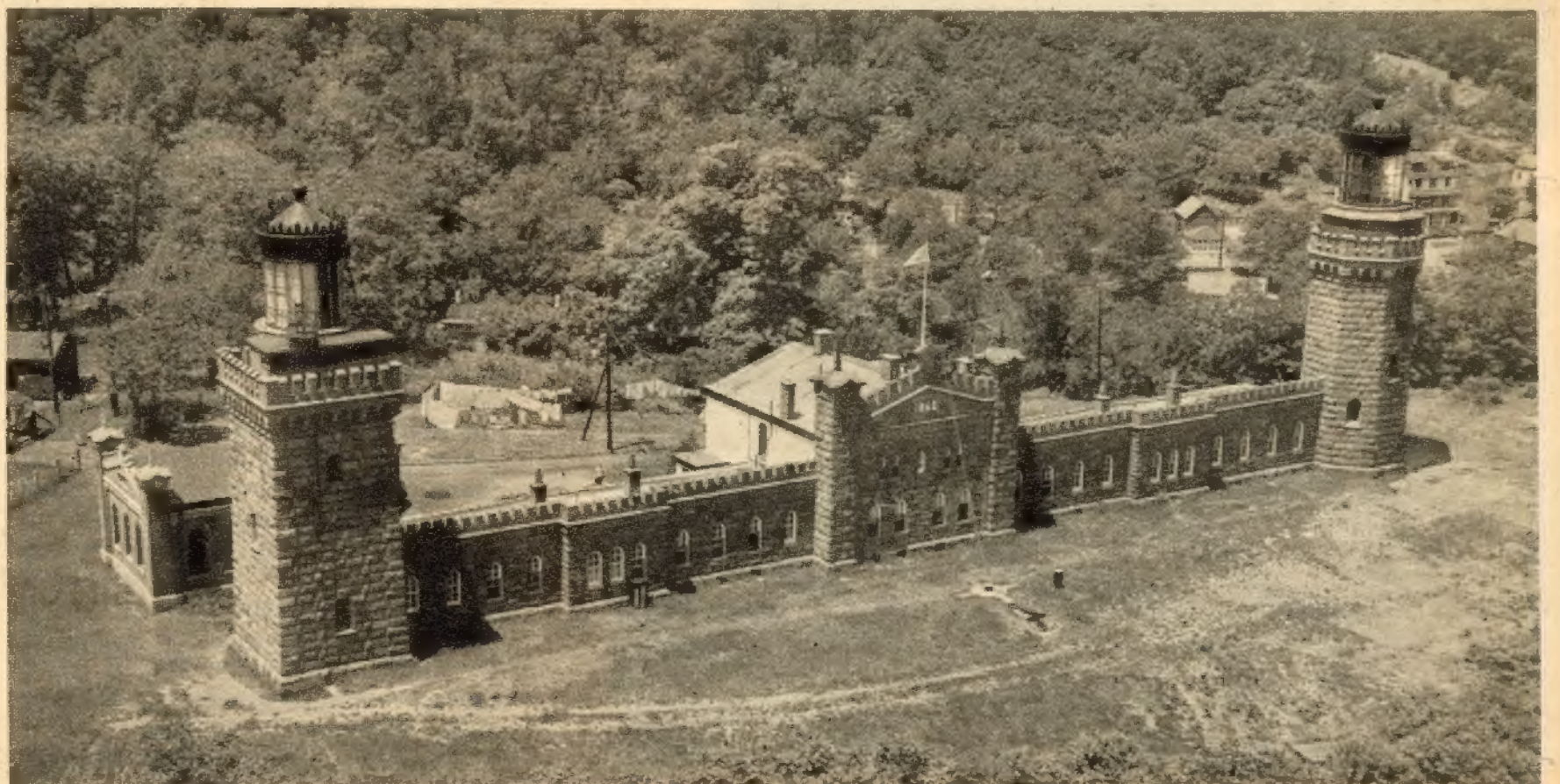
There is familiarity: The Highlands of Navesink are the boldest coastal landmark from Maine to Key West; Sandy Hook, spread below the Highlands, is easier to see in full than any strip of Jersey shore. Yet, there is mystery, too—mystery as evanescent

This is the second of a series of articles on the New Jersey shore. Next week's chapter will deal with the northern segment in a "triangular" area bounded loosely by the Highlands, the Garden State Parkway and Ocean Grove.

as Captain Kidd's treasure and James Fenimore Cooper's "Water Witch," and mystery as real as the military censorship which envelopes Sandy Hook like a morning fog.

Liken Sandy Hook to a finger and the Highlands to the palm of a hand, then link finger and palm to a wrist at Keansburg and a forearm back to Laurence Harbor. Here, where Sandy Hook Bay waters give and take with Raritan Bay, are the beaches closest

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Darkened since 1949, Navesink's once-powerful "Twin Lights" now serve artistic and historic purposes.

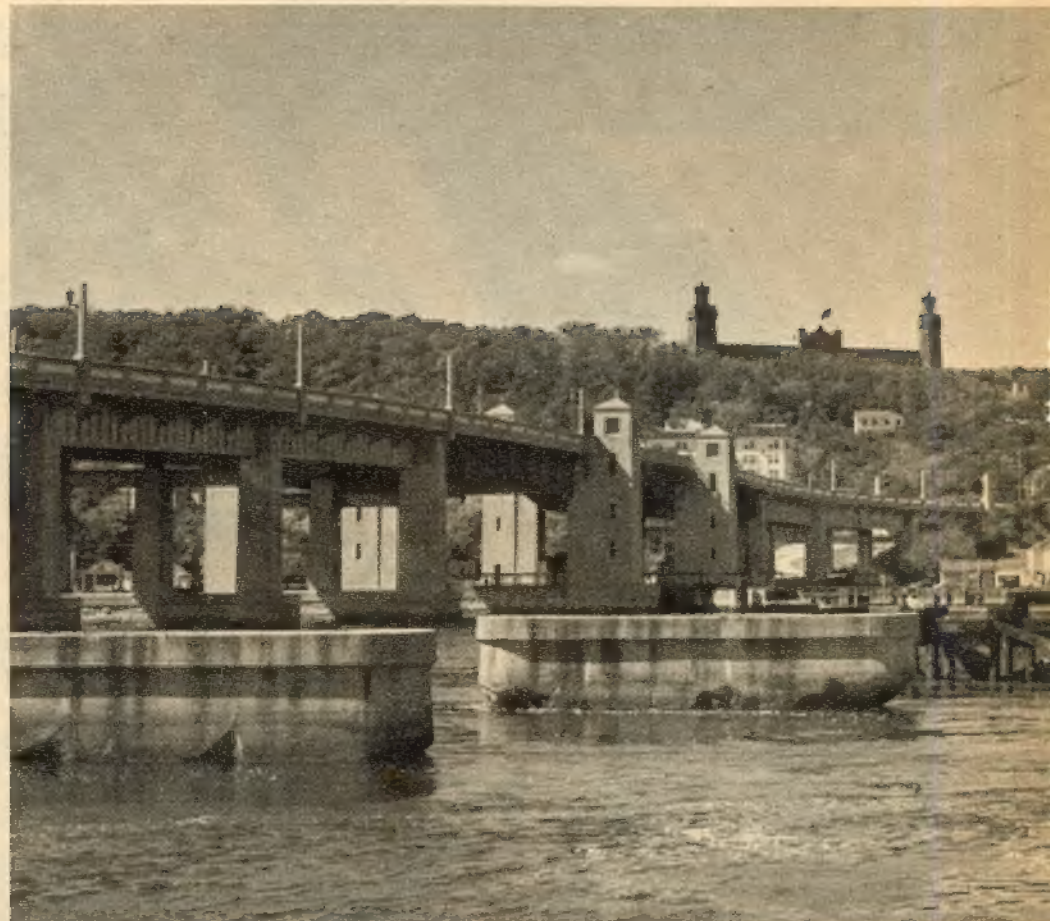
HIGHLANDS AND HOOK



Historic lighthouse on Hook pictured from air.



Boat basin at Atlantic Highlands, looking across bay to heavily wooded slopes of Highlands atop which runs Scenic Drive.



Twin Lights atop Highlands overlook Rt. 36 bridge over Navesink River. Paralleling span are naked piers of old trestle. LEFT: The Hook looking toward Highlands in right background.

(Continued From Preceding Page)
to metropolitan North Jersey and New York—and the beaches so often overlooked despite their proximity.

Through the years the Hook, the Highlands and the Bay have played host to a fascinating parade of transients, from Henry Hudson to last summer's turf fishermen, from Captain Kidd to the motorists who sweat out a summer on Rt. 36. The tranquil waters inside the Hook have welcomed everything from pirates to bootleggers, from clammers to yachtsmen, from the sails of the old Gloucester fishing fleet to the motors of modern pleasure cruisers.

THE theme of the entire region is the subtle interplay of war and peace. Revolutionary War heroics and treachery touched hill and peninsula alike. Since the building of the first military fort in 1812 Sandy Hook has served as first line of defense for the vital harbor waters of New York. Guided missile Nike has replaced giant coastal guns, but the defensive purpose is not one whit different. Sandy Hook was—and is—a vital bastion of defense.

Whoever peers out over Sandy Hook from any of a dozen vantage points in the Highlands sees little to suggest the potential violence of mysterious defenses. Peace is supreme. The Nike base is well camouflaged, just as the tremendous 16-inch rifles of World War II folded back behind sand dunes and holly trees when their earth-shuddering practice sessions ended. The peace of pleasant bygone days gracefully touches hill and hook alike.

Far out on Sandy Hook the eye can see the 193-year-old lighthouse bleaching whiter with each passing sun. Its light stopped glowing only during the Revolution and World War II and it shines on now, as the oldest lighthouse in the Western Hemisphere.

The Twin Lights of Navesink rise in stony prominence above the spot where the waters of the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers mingle before wash-

ing into the bay. Those lights, once the most powerful beacon in the United States, have been dark since 1949. They now serve only artistic or historic purposes. The Twin Lights welcome visitors as a museum; Sandy Hook light is viewed close up only by military men, who might even see it as an outdated relic.

IS there more past than present in this hill-hook-bay land? If that is the impression, false it is: there is likely to be more future than either past or present for the region if the military ever lets go of some of the Sandy Hook acreage it has possessed for more than 60 years.

Many times since 1930 the government has appeared about to permit development of the lower half of Sandy Hook as a state park, in the best traditions of Jones Beach. Indeed, in June 1950, the state moved rapidly toward creating its long-sought park land, only to be abruptly halted by war in Korea. Sandy Hook park is certain to come some day—just as certainly as the never-still surf seeks to change the contours of the thin peninsula.

Nature worked overtime forming Sandy Hook, a classic example of unstable sand pulling itself together to defy the pounding force and fury of an ocean gathering power all the way from Spain. Geologists find Sandy Hook very simple to explain; observers without benefit of geology find it a marvel.

LONG ago there was no Hook. The Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers flowed directly into the sea east of the Highlands. Slowly, grain of sand by tiny grain of sand, prevailing long-shore currents pushed a narrow spit of land to the north, uncertainly moving across the river estuaries although not completely closing them. The spit lengthened and, out beyond the full influence of the rivers, it widened.

Then, incredibly, the sands, incited



RIGHT: Looking out over Sandy Hook Bay from Mt. Mitchell, at 260 feet the highest point on Atlantic Coast.



by the mischievous ocean, stood up to the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers and closed their mouths—forcing them to flow northward inside the new hook. Periodically the ocean has recanted; a half dozen times in recorded history angry seas have smashed the river inlets through to the ocean again. Only the building of buttresses in the last 70 years has kept the capricious Atlantic in check.

Today Sandy Hook is still a growing geological adolescent; its area has quadrupled since the Hook first was surveyed in 1685. The old lighthouse when erected in 1764 stood near the lapping waves on the spit's end. Now the end of the Hook is a mile and a quarter away from the light.

Tight military censorship has kept the secrets of Sandy Hook hidden for a half century from all but a relatively small number of soldiers, Coast Guardsmen and fishermen. Some two miles north from the gate near Highland Beach is a Nike base—everyone with the slightest curiosity knows that, even the Russians. Whoever desires a more intimate impression needs only drive up Scenic Drive on the Highlands, unlimber a pair of high-powered binoculars and look. Seldom is a vital military base so temptingly spread out for spying eyes—and for spies who forget their glasses there are dime-in-slot magnifiers everywhere.

It would be a pity to be occupied with spying atop the Highlands. Too much else sweeps into binocular view to make Nike of more than passing concern to the average visitor.

Immediately below, the two-mile-long dock of Earle Naval Ammunition Depot protrudes far out into Sandy Hook Bay. This dock, said to be the longest of its type in the world, is capable of servicing Navy ships as large as cruisers. On the bay shore's fringe, marinas at Leonardo and Atlantic Highlands shelter enough boats

to assure the bay's being aswarm with hulls on a warm July Sunday.

Far off at the edge of the mist to the north are the towers of Manhattan, framed on the east by Coney Island and on the west by the Statue of Liberty. Between Manhattan and the tip of the Hook is Ambrose Channel, alive with ships outward bound to adventure and inward bound from exotic far-away.

Then Sandy Hook itself swims into binocular view, its curving area blanketed by the dark green of thousands of ancient gnarled holly trees. On the bay side of the Hook is serenity. Inside the cove called The Horseshoe, Jersey Central steamships long ago made connections with trains bound for Long Branch. Peaceful, too, is Spermaceti Cove, the almost landlocked waters where in times past a giant whale washed ashore and bequeathed a name.

The Highlands fall away quickly, even precipitously in spots, to the bay on the north, the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Navesink River on the south. The crouching hills of the Highlands are the best-known landfall on the Atlantic coast. Mt. Mitchell in the Highlands, at 260 feet the highest point on the Atlantic coast, has been the first glimpse of America for millions of immigrants—all the way back to the 17th century Dutch.

The rugged and thickly wooded Highlands are only moderately changed in appearance since that day in September 1609 when Henry Hudson dropped the Half Moon's anchor and sent his men ashore to seek water. Roads entwined the heights and houses spread discreetly over the slopes, yet, looking upward from Sandy Hook, most of these 20th century encroachments are masked by the tall hardwood forests.

Deep in those trees is the very same flow of clear, cool spring water where Hudson's men refilled their casks. Through time, even unto 1900, sailing

ships stood in behind the Hook to get water from "The Spout." Thomas H. Leonard in his 1923 history recalled the 300 sails of the New England fishing fleet clustered on the bay—a "sight beyond description" as they awaited a favorable wind after getting Highlands water.

Of all the ships which found refuge in the bay, however, none loom larger in tradition than Captain William Kidd's buccaneer ship or the fanciful "Water Witch" launched by a push of James Fenimore Cooper's pen in 1830.

Cap'n Kidd drank from the Spout, he did. He buried treasure out on Sandy Hook by a lone pine tree, or he tossed it overboard in Sandy Hook Bay to escape a man of war, or he buried it in the sands on the bay shore. Anyone with an ounce of romance in his heart believes these things; aye, knows them. How else to account for the several time-worn coins dug from the sand near Highlands in 1948? If Cap'n Kidd never really unfurled a sail off the Hook, it remains a fact that no one ever delves into the region without coming up with at least a bit of Kidd stuff.

AS for the "Water Witch," she was a seagoing lady of a different nature. James Fenimore Cooper drew that full-rigged "Skimmer of the Seas" out of thin air, writing hastily in a Paris hotel in 1830 before the moody ship escaped him altogether. "The Water Witch" is one of America's finest sea legends and her sailing lanes unmistakably were the waters at the feet of the Highlands of Navesink.

Cooper remembered well the Highlands where he often had visited and he transplanted his memories into his novel as a background for the bewitched ship. A half century ago the ruins of the book's villa, "Lust in Rust," could be shown visitors. Today nothing remains—except the sign "Water Witch" on a railroad station, a section of the Highlands named

"Water Witch," and, of course, Cooper's book.

For all their foreboding topography, the Highlands had permanent settlers by 1664, and a year later 100 families lived on or near the heights. One of the early arrivals, Richard Hartshorne, by 1671 controlled nearly all of Sandy Hook and Highlands—then called Portland Poynt, but a nice parcel of real estate by any name. Hartshorne bought the land from the Indians for the usual beads and guns and firewater, then, annoyingly enough, later had to buy from the Indians their rights to harvest beach plums on the Hook.

THE Revolution provided an interlude, dominated by the activities of vengeful Tories who made Sandy Hook light a fort from which they struck at American rebels. The Tories achieved a measure of fame—or infamy—by hanging Joshua Huddy from a high tree on the Highlands on April 12, 1782. Captain Huddy, they claimed, had cruelly put to death one Philip White. The story held no water; White had been shot while Huddy was a prisoner. The Tories exacted their vengeance anyway.

After the war clammers and fishermen found the peaceful bay to their liking. At what is now Keyport they took from the waters the celebrated Chingarora oysters—named by the Indians before white men arrived. At Parkertown, where the Navesink met Sandy Hook Bay, men lived off, by and for the clam. One writer said in 1890 that clams were to Parkertown "what the whale once was to Nantucket."

Some who gazed across the Highlands to New York in 1860 recognized the fundamental destiny of the Highlands and the Hook—to warn the city of an approaching enemy, to fight that enemy if he arrived, to guide ships into the harbor. Sandy Hook, tied to

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HIGHLANDS AND HOOK

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New Jersey by a narrow isthmus, owed its vitality to New York.

THE city and those who came to it by sea had depended on Sandy Hook light since 1764, and later depended even more on the tall twin stone towers erected in 1862 on the Highlands of Navesink. Still, what could bring friends could bring foes equally well; in 1858 the United States government began to replace 50-year-old wooden forts along the top rim of Sandy Hook with something more substantial.

Government builders labored mightily and spent greatly. They brought in huge blocks of New England granite and threw up a wall a mile in circumference. They put 75 huge cannons in place in case any Confederate ships hove in sight. They labored mightily, perhaps even suspecting as they worked that the walls couldn't withstand a pounding by heavy artillery, and in the end spent 10 million dollars without even finishing the job.

Someone suggested naming the fort for President Lincoln, although at least one man wrote that "no one who respects the memory of the martyred President calls the fort by that name."

As the years rolled on, the land-conscious government added to the original holdings it had bought from the Hartshornes in 1807. By 1892 the entire Hook rested in government hands. Far out on the sandy waste, amid the poison ivy and ancient holly, Ft. Hancock grew in strength.

ACROSS Sandy Hook Bay, down along the bay shore, everyone except the Parkertown clammers wished a bit of the prosperity down the beach at Long Branch and Asbury Park and Ocean Grove could stick to the nice little villages by the bay. Parkertown clammers, for their part, preferred to see the visitors go right on by.

What made things more galling for those who could see dollars and vacationists are synonymous was that so many of the visitors came gaily across the wide bay from New York by steamboat, landed at Keyport or in Sandy Hook's horseshoe and then took carriage or train down the strand to spend their money at Long Branch. If they paused at all, the visitors did so only in irritation because a train was late or a tallyho was not on hand.

A few artists and actors had built homes in the Highlands after the Civil War and Harper's Magazine sent a journalist down nearly every summer in the 1870s and 1880s to write about the pristine loveliness and the ever-present loneliness. There just wasn't much reason for summer folks to come down in numbers; so, said enterprising holders of land along the bay shore, let's build something for the folks.

REV. WILLIAM W. RAMSEY, out at Granville, and the Leonard family at Bay View got that same idea at about the same time. From those ideas grew Keansburg and Atlantic Highlands.

Mr. Ramsey saw possibilities over



The Spout, the spring near Atlantic Highlands where Henry Hudson's men refilled Half Moon's water casks on a September day in 1609.

and above his thin church collections. He helped change the name of Granville to Keansburg in honor of U.S. Sen. John Kean of Elizabeth (senator from 1899 to 1911). Mr. Ramsey was Mayor Ramsey in 1881, the year he spent \$70 for view postcards. The post office canceled \$65 worth of cards the first year; Mayor Ramsey lost \$5.

Well, he didn't lose \$5, he invested \$5. He induced boarding house people to make postcards the next year and he made up another 20 different views of his own. Keansburg boomed. Thousands who received postcards telling of others "having a wonderful time" came to see for themselves. By 1913, as many as 40,000 people a year visited Mayor Ramsey's postcard-primed beach resort.

The Leonard family (for whom Leonardo is named) laid out Bay View in 1880—complete with restaurant, parlor, 100 bathing houses and a pier to receive steamships from the city. Bay View, which quickly was renamed Atlantic Highlands, was projected as a camp meeting town with heavy overtones of temperance.

Atlantic Highlands, said the founders, existed for lofty reasons, unlike those other places for excursions, "which were largely lager beer gardens, frequented by roughs and pickpockets." One of the Leonards said in 1881 that the Highlands camp meeting would be on such a scale as to "throw Ocean Grove out of business."

Ocean Grove didn't shut up shop, even after building of the New York & Atlantic Highlands Railroad in 1883 gave the Highlands a link with Red Bank and the outside world. Soon few even discussed the camp meeting. For that matter, few discussed any-

thing; few came. Growth came unexpectedly in 1882 because when the government bought all of Sandy Hook that year the New Jersey Southern (Jersey Central) Railroad switched its terminal to Atlantic Highlands.

HAPPY times settled over the Highlands, the Hook and the Bay in the first two decades of the 20th century. The bay towns, paced by Keansburg, found vacationists much better for the pocketbook than clams any day. Some built boardwalks, some enlarged their beaches, some inaugurated annual promotion feats such as Keyport's annual Salt Water Day in August.

Guns roared off the ramparts of Ft. Hancock during World War I, usually just to make sure they still worked, although on one occasion in 1918 they blasted away at a real honest-to-goodness German U-boat. At least the Army announced that when its guns spoke on Aug. 13, 1918, they did so because a "Hun U-boat" had rifled 16 shells on the tip of the Hook during an afternoon fog. The Sandy Hook guns roared back with the rage of a sleeping giant stung by a hornet.

Except for that one incident, the 7,000 men and officers at Ft. Hancock scarcely disturbed the local quietude during World War I any more than the 9,000 Coast Artillery troops training out in the sand during World War II did much beyond rattling dishes on china closet shelves during practice sessions with the great guns.

WAR of a somewhat more intimate nature took over the placid bays and the quiet bayshore during prohibition. Some local clammers-turned-businessmen disagreed with the law so violently that they decided to bring in illi-

cit rum in fervent protest. Throughout the long reign of the 18th Amendment the bayshore echoed and re-echoed with scandal, punctured occasionally by a shot aimed at or by a bootlegger or by a Coast Guard vessel at a rum runner. Venturing out at night sometimes became dangerous, and an Atlantic Highlands Assn. formed in 1923 begged an end to "bootleggers, gangsters and gunmen."

Prohibition and the strange bedfellows it created did no permanent damage to the region, nonetheless. The building of good concrete highways in the 1920s brought thousands of new visitors to Laurence Harbor and Union Beach, to Keyport and Keansburg and Atlantic Highlands. The concrete ribbons doomed the railroads and the Sandy Hook Bay boats. Prosperity, tempered of course by the depression, rode the highways to the bay.

That's the way today was born. The Garden State Parkway brings in new business, but who knows how much it also tempts drivers to look a few more miles down the beach? The bay villages are never likely to rival Atlantic City in size, but who is to shrug off as unimportant the weekend crowds of 75,000 at Keansburg, where major overhauling of the beach in 1954 was aimed to keep Keansburg abreast of demand and supply?

ECONOMICS is the one thing that all seaside or bay resort owners fret about all the time. Many worry privately that a public park at Sandy Hook will ruin business in established resorts. One Shore mayor at a public session said the proposed park will bring in "riff raff"—roughly defined by him to mean people who come only for a day with a lunch packed in a box and don't even spend a nickle on a pinball machine, much less rent a bungalow.

A casual visitor is relieved of such incidental worries about economics. He can see the handsome old Twin Lights up close, can gaze long distance at the remarkably long-lived lighthouse out on Sandy Hook. He can visit the spout where Cap'n Kidd and Henry Hudson and the Gloucester fishermen filled their casks. He can find a marker to Captain Huddy, can find enough mementoes to make Cooper's legend clear. He can guide his car over the tortuous roads winding over the Highlands and be rewarded with ever-changing—and often most unsealike—landscapes.

This is only icing on the cake. The thing persisting is the essential romance of the place, a place touched by the sea, yet apart from it. Nothing—wind, storm, hurricane, even people—changes the Highlands much.

Philip Freneau, celebrated New Jersey "Poet of the Revolution" who lived at nearby Matawan, summed up well the Highlands in the 18th century:

"These hills, the pride of all the coast,
To mighty distance seen,
With aspect bold and rugged brow
That shade the neighboring main;
These heights for solitude
designed,
This rude resounding shore,
These vales impervious to the
wind,
Tall oaks that to the tempest bend,
Half Druid I adore."

MARCH 3, 1957